



Hospital Catering Services in Wales – Audit Committee Update

Purpose

1. The purpose of this note is to update the Audit Committee on the actions being taken by the NHS in Wales to improve the standards of hospital catering. In the light of Members' consideration of the Auditor General's forward programme in October 2002, the note also explains the current position with regard to the Auditor General's own examination of catering services.

Background At the Audit Committee meeting in October 2000, the Auditor General set out his forward programme for Value for Money studies to be carried out in 2001-02. This programme included a study reviewing hospital catering services, which received the Committee was happy to support. The proposal noted that, according to the British Nutrition Foundation, hospital catering was so poor that some patients were becoming clinically malnourished during their stay. In addition, up to 40 per cent of NHS meals were being thrown away. The study was intended to examine the efforts being made in the NHS in Wales to provide cost-effective, nutritional food.

- At the time, the Audit Commission was also undertaking a review of hospital catering and they published a report in August 2001. To allow time for the impact of the Audit Commission report to be considered and acted upon by the National Health Service, we decided to defer our own study to a later date
- In March 2002, the All-Wales Catering/Nutrition Group issued a framework for catering and nutrition that was intended to complement recent and planned work by the National Audit Office, the Audit Commission and the Assembly's own groups. The Auditor General considered the impact of the framework on his planned study and explained his intentions in the Forward Programme 2002-03 considered by the Audit Committee in October this year, to:

"take account of the work by the Audit Commission and by the Assembly commissioned All-Wales Catering/Nutrition Group and to look at this subject when the changes recommended by this work have had time to bed down."

The Role of the All-Wales Catering/Nutrition Group

- The All-Wales Catering/Nutrition Group was established to address the issues on catering identified in the NHS Plan '*Improving Health in Wales*'. The NHS Plan set out new targets, which stated that:
 - specifications for catering will be established and monitored on a regular basis;
 - patient satisfaction surveys will include questions on hospital food with ratings that will provide Trust Boards with information on which to regularly evaluate the quality and standard of delivery of their catering services;
 - trusts' prospectuses will include information on the catering services of the Trust and the results of its annual catering review; and
 - hospital nutrition teams will report on the adequacy of patient meals and the quality of services to a named member of the Trust Board and each Trust will establish a Nutritional Study to develop policy and practice.

The Audit Commission Report on Hospital Catering

- The All-Wales Catering/Nutrition group published a Framework in May 2002. The Group's framework took account of the findings of the Audit Commission report into Hospital Catering in Wales, published in March 2002. The Audit Commission had concluded that there was evidence that trusts were making progress in developing their catering services but that best practice needed to be more widely applied. They also noted that performance could be improved in a number of important areas, including identifying problems such as:
 - three-quarters of Welsh hospitals were not systematically screening patients on admission to identify their nutritional needs;
 - some patients could miss out on meals, either because they did not receive the assistance they required, or because meal times were disturbed by ward rounds or diagnostic tests, or because the patient arrived on a ward outside set meal times;
 - only one-third of Welsh hospitals were routinely using standard costed recipes to ensure consistency of quality and cost;
 - nearly three-quarters of hospitals were subsidising the catering service provided to staff and visitors, but only one in five had set a target for contributions from non-patient services; and
 - the total cost of wasted meals from unserved meals in NHS Wales was approaching £1 million a year and half the hospitals surveyed were wasting at least 10 per cent of the meals they produced.

The Framework for Improving Hospital Catering

- The revised Welsh Risk Management Standard 23 formed the core element of the Group's framework. The standard sets out a range of goals for nutrition and catering in the NHS and is summarised at Appendix A. The Group's report concluded that those responsible for hospital catering should ensure that:
 - all elements of the catering/nutrition process are planned, managed and delivered as one single process;

- patients' nutritional needs are an integral part of their care, with ongoing assessment and action being taken as required;
 - patients can expect flexible and uninterrupted mealtimes and receive assistance and support at all stages of the process from menu choice to assistance with eating; and
 - there are clinical quality of service and financial reasons for ensuring that nutrition and catering standards are achieved and maintained.
1. The framework included specific plans for improvements, and set targets to be achieved by the end of December 2002 for all Trusts. These targets are:
 - that 100% of inpatients are given a nutritional screening on admission;
 - that all inpatients can expect to receive a suitable nutritional alternative when a meal has been missed;
 - where required, inpatients are assisted in eating their meals; and
 - that Trust multi-disciplinary teams produce an action plan for the implementation of Standard 23.

Progress to Date

- To date, the Welsh Risk Management Standard on catering is complete and progress against this standard will be included in the next returns to be submitted by Trusts in summer 2003. The Risk Management Standard focuses on ensuring that actions are in place to reduce risk. In addition, Welsh Health Estates, who are responsible for the quality of facilities, maintain an Estate and Facilities Performance Management System for which Trusts also submit annual returns. The current system does not include information on catering, although Welsh Health Estates now plan for information on the cost of catering services to be included in returns, also from the summer of 2003.

Future National Audit Office Work

- The Auditor General signalled his intention to return to this subject in his recent Forward Programme. The National Audit Office will continue to keep under review the progress of the NHS in achieving the framework and the risk management standards. The results of the standards and the Performance Management System returns are expected to be available in September 2003. We intend to review these results and consider the appropriateness of a study and more detailed study options as necessary.
- The Auditor General and the Committee already have a strong forward programme of reports in the Health area. In considering the options for revisiting Hospital Catering, we will also take into account other health studies currently underway and those planned for the future. We will report to the Committee on our plan once we have been able to make a full assessment. This assessment will, in any case, be presented to the Committee within the Auditor General's forward programme in October 2003.

Appendix A

Selected Extracts from the Welsh Risk Management Standard 23: Nutrition and Catering

Areas for Assessment

1. Responsibility for catering services, nutrition policy and food hygiene is clearly defined and there is a clear line of management accountability throughout the organisation up to Board level.
2. Food premises are registered with the local authority.
3. All food preparation, processing, manufacturing, distribution and transportation, is carried out in hygienic conditions.
4. All food ingredients and prepared foods are purchased in accordance with standard purchasing specifications that are used by all suppliers and catering staff.
5. All food handlers maintain a high standard of personal hygiene.
6. All food deliveries are received in accordance with legislative requirements, and stored in appropriate conditions and protected from contamination and deterioration, including protection against pests.
7. All foods, including raw materials, ingredients, intermediate products and finished products, are kept at temperatures which comply with the Food Safety (Temperature Control) Regulations 1995.
8. Food safety assessments are carried out with the aim of identifying the critical food safety steps within the business and taking appropriate control measures to reduce any associated risks.
9. A policy exists which effectively ensures the availability of correct nutrition to all patients by co-ordinating the activities of clinician, dieticians, catering and other support services staff.
10. On admission and at intervals according with best practice, every patient is screened and where necessary their nutritional status assessed to identify patients who are malnourished or at risk of becoming malnourished. Any patient identified as such is assessed regularly and appropriate action taken.
11. All dietary needs and account of patients' preferences, taking oral nutrition are met through meals, which provide their nutritional requirement, being offered as a choice of dishes presented in a written menu.
12. The environment and other factors are conducive to enabling individual patients/clients to eat.
13. Food hazards, incidents and complaints are dealt with in accordance with HSG (97)28, and general requirements contained in the risk management system standard.

14. Contingency arrangements are in place to ensure the delivery of safe and nutritious food in the event of total or partial failure of normal arrangements.
15. All personnel involved in the handling and provision of food are given supervision, instruction and/or training in accordance with their level of work activity and responsibility and training records are kept.
16. There is access to up-to-date legislation and guidance relating to food hygiene, nutrition and catering services.
17. Key indicators capable of showing improvements in catering services and food hygiene, and the management of associated risk are used at all levels of the organisation, including the board.
18. The system in place for food safety is monitored and reviewed by management and the Board in order to make improvements to the system
19. The internal Audit function, in conjunction with nutrition/catering/food hygiene specialist (s), carries out periodic audits to provide assurance to the Board that a system providing for nutrition, catering and food hygiene is in place that conforms to the requirements of this standard.